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Hawthorne Cottage Opens

BRIGUS, Newfoundland, June 27,1995 - Hawthorne Cottage, the Brigus home of famous Arctic explorer Captain Robert Bartlett, was officially opened today in a public ceremony on the grounds of the historic building. The event marked the culmination of three years of detailed conservation work, research and planning by Parks Canada and the Newfoundland Historic Parks Association (NHPA).

St. John's East MP Bonnie Hickey said that the house is particularly noteworthy because of one of its former owners, Captain Robert Bartlett, the famous navigator who was involved with Robert Peary's 1909 dash to reach the North Pole.

"Captain Bob received international acclaim and achieved a high level of celebrity status," said Ms. Hickey. "He can be compared to the first explorers of space. His sense of adventure led him to frontiers that few before him had ever crossed." Ms. Hickey was speaking on behalf of Michel Dupuy, Minister of Canadian Heritage, and David Dingwall, Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA).

The story of the Bartlett family is also presented at Hawthorne Cottage as a counterpoint to the Arctic exploration theme. A visit to the house and the community will give the visitor a complete experience of Brigus life.

The structure of the cottage itself is considered to be of national historic significance.
Dr. Thomas Symons, chair of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, said during the opening that Hawthorne Cottage is the only example in the province of the Newfoundland picturesque architectural style. The Newfoundland vernacular architectural style was also later incorporated into the structure.

The cottage and its collection of around 3,500 artifacts were given to Parks Canada in 1987 by its most recent owner, the Honourable Justice Rupert W. Bartlett, a nephew of Captain Bob Bartlett. A unique 21-year lease was signed between Parks Canada and the NHPA, a non-profit group, to develop, operate and maintain the property. The NHPA raised $104,000 for the development of the site, ACOA contributed $246,000 and Parks Canada, $250,000. Parks Canada has also spent an additional $300,000 on professional and technical support for the project, such as artifact conservation, interpretation planning, structural and landscape architecture, as well as historical research.

The people of Brigus have been very active in preparing for today's opening. An advisory committee made up of people from the Town of Brigus, the Brigus Historical and Conservation Society, and the Brigus Development Association have helped with the necessary fundraising and have advised the NHPA and Parks Canada on the smooth development of what will become an important tourist attraction for the area. NHPA executive director Catherine Dempsey said: "There is tremendous interest and support for Hawthorne Cottage. People are happy with the amount of work that has gone into developing the site and are delighted the historical landmark is open to the public."

Hawthorne Cottage is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. for the summer season. For more information visitors may call (709) 528-4004.

Funding for this initiative was provided for in the February 1995 federal budget and is therefore built into the existing fiscal framework. This initiative is an example of how this government is prioritizing its spending so that it can better serve Canadians by making efficient use of their tax dollars.

Information :

Jane Brewer
Communications Officer
Parks Canada
(709) 772-3076

Neil Wilson
Press Secretary
Minister's Office
(819) 997-7788